



Department of Economic and
Community Development

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Catherine H. Smith
Commissioner

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
3/3/15

Re: SB 1017 AN ACT CONCERNING MANUFACTURING

HB 6916: AN ACT CONCERNING JOB GROWTH AND EDUCATION

Senator Hartley, Representative Perone, Senator Frantz, Representative Camillo and members of the Commerce Committee. Thanks for the opportunity to testify on two bills before you here today: SB 1017 and HB 6916.

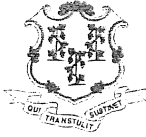
As you are aware, our mission at the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is to develop and implement strategies to increase the state's economic competitiveness. We do this by attracting and retaining businesses and jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods and communities, and preserving and promoting cultural and tourism assets.

SB 1017 would require DECD to study the needs of manufacturers in the state. Similarly, HB 6916 would oblige the agency, in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Board of Regents for Higher Education and The University of Connecticut, to study workforce demands and job training needs.

DECD views each of these bills as unnecessary. In 2014 the legislature passed PA- 14- 98 authorizing the creation of the Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation Fund (CMIF) and capitalizing it with up to \$30 million. The CMIF is administered by DECD, and its advisory board consists of representatives from the manufacturing sector, including large OEMs and smaller supply chain companies (see attached). The board is supported by various organizations throughout the state, including the Connecticut Department of Labor, industry associations, the state's workforce boards, and non-profits that assists the state's manufacturing sector.

Early meetings of the CMIF board included an overview of many of the studies that have been undertaken on the needs of the manufacturing community, and this analysis has been the foundation of the board's focus and priorities. In particular, the board has been concerned with talent availability and development, as this has regularly been one of the top issues raised in these surveys.

The CMIF is committed to deploying its funds to help to close the gaps identified by the industry. For example, the needs of manufacturers are regularly discussed at the advisory



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board meetings and those discussions inform the activities of the CMIF. The new "Voucher Program" is an outgrowth of those meetings and is already providing companies with assistance to purchase new equipment, jumpstart research and development, and train their employees.

Additionally, the CMIF has established subcommittees to address the workforce needs of manufacturers. These subcommittees consist of representatives from the Connecticut Department of Labor, The Board of Regents, the Connecticut Department of Education, and industry. Currently, they are developing recommendations for incumbent worker training initiatives and apprenticeship programs. We very much value this collaborative approach to finding appropriate solutions for this critical industry in our economy.

In our opinion, the requirements in SB 1017 and HB 6916 would be largely duplicative of the CMIF's efforts. Thanks for allowing me to share some thoughts on these pieces of legislation. I appreciate, in advance, your due consideration.



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